

## Message Text

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65-62

ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00

TRSE-00 PRS-01 L-01 EB-03 SP-02 OMB-01 (ISO)W

----- 029079

R 261215Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 2804

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT OMAN

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 0190

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 : GDS

TAGS : PFOR, BA

SUBJECT : KUWAITI COOPERATION DELEGATION VISIT

1. GOB FOREIGN MINISTER, WHO IS GENERALLY NERVOUS ABOUT KUWAITI VISITORS BEARING FORMAL DRAFT COOPERATION AGREEMENTS, TELLS ME GOB CONSIDERS RECENT VISIT OF RASHID AL RASHID'S DELEGATION EXTREMELY USEFUL. WHILE STATEMENTS TO PRESS BY RASHID AND BAHRAINI COMMERCE/ECONOMIC UNDERSECRETARY KASSIM TRIED TO PUT SHINIEST POSSIBLE GLOSS ON PROSPECTS FOR GULF COMMON MARKET AND COMMON GULF CURRENCY, IT IS CLEAR THAT NO SIGNIFICANT AGREEMENT WAS REACHED WITH REGARD TO THESE TWO PET KUWAITI PROJECTS. NEVERTHELESS, A LOT OF USEFUL SORTING OUT ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT EXISTING BILATERAL ECONOMIC AGREEMENT SEEMS TO HAVE OCCURED. BAHRAINI FOREIGN MINISTER FEELS THAT SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS WAS MADE TOWARD ESTABLISHING RECIPROCOL RIGHT OF BAHRAINIS TO OWN LAND, TO INVEST AND TO WORK IN KUWAIT. HE NOTES POSSIBILITY THAT NATIONAL BANK OF BAHRAIN AND KUWAIT WILL BE PERMITTED TO OPERATE IN KUWAIT AS PRIME  
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EXAMPLE OF THIS SORT OF INCREASED PRACTICAL COOPERATION.

FOREIGN MINISTER DESCRIBES VARIOUS INDUSTRIAL JOINT VENTURES DISCUSSED, SUCH AS AIR CONDITIONER AND REFRIGERATION UNIT MANUFACTURE, AS AGREEMENTS IN PRINCIPLE WHICH WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED BY PRIVATE SECTOR. THE EXCEPTION IS POSSIBLE KUWAIT-BAHRAIN COOPERATION IN GOVERNMENT-OWNED PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRY, ABOUT WHICH GOB SEEMS TO HAVE BECOME QUITE EXCITED. IT ALSO APPEARS GOB MAY HAVE GOTTEN PROMISE OF KUWAITI PARTICIPATION, AND PRESUMABLY FINANCIAL HELP, IN ITS PUBLIC HOUSING SCHEMES.

2. BAHRAIN RESPECT FOR THE SOPHISTICATION, STRENGTH AND DYNAMISM OF KUWAITI BUREAUCRATIC AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS IS OBVIOUSLY GROWING AND BAHRAINIS RECOGNIZE THAT KUWAIT IS MOST ADVANCED ARAB STATE IN THE REGION IN THIS REGARD. YET THE LEADERSHIP PROBLEM OF GULF COOPERATION REMAINS. IN WAKE OF RASHID'S VISIT, BOTH AMIR AND FOREIGN MINISTER OF BAHRAIN HAVE NOTED TO ME THEIR CONCERN THAT KUWAIT AND BAHRAIN ARE EQUIPPED TO PROCEED MORE RAPIDLY WITH GULF COOPERATION THAN THE PREPAREDNESS OF SAUDI LEADERSHIP WILL ALLOW. FOREIGN MINISTER CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT ONLY SAUDI ARABIA CAN PROVIDE THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP ESSENTIAL TO GULF COOPERATION BUT HE ACKNOWLEDGES THAT SAUDI INSTITUTIONS, PREOCCUPIED WITH OTHER PROBLEMS, DO NOT YET SEEM UP TO THE TASK. HE REMAINS ADAMANT THAT KUWAIT CANNOT PROVIDE THIS POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, MAINTAINING THAT IT POLITICALLY IS A WEAK AND DIVIDED COUNTRY PLAGUED BY PARLIAMENTARY OBSTRUCTIONISM AND, MORE SERIOUSLY, THE EVILS OF "FREEDOM OF THE PRESS". BY WAY OF COMPARISON, FOREIGN MINISTER NOTES THAT POLITICALLY, "EVEN QATAR IS STRONGER THAN KUWAIT BECAUSE WHEN THE AMIR OF QATAR PROMISES SOMETHING, HE CAN DELIVER".

3. COMMENT: WHEN I SUGGESTED TO FOREIGN MINISTER THAT EXISTENCE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM OF THE PRESS MIGHT BE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF STRENGTH FOR KUWAIT IN THE LONG TERM, HE DID NOT CONTEST THE POINT. HE SUGGESTED RATHER THAT THE AMERICAN EXAMPLE INDICATES THAT WHILE DEMOCRATIC NATIONS WITH AN ACTIVE FREE PRESS MAY BE THE STRONGEST IN THE LONG-RUN, THEY ARE NOT MUCH FUN FOR OTHERS TO DO BUSINESS WITH.  
END COMMENT

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** AGREEMENT DRAFT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION, VISITS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 26 FEB 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** greeneet  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976MANAMA00190  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760073-0530  
**From:** MANAMA  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760211/aaaaailt.tel  
**Line Count:** 107  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** LIMDIS  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** LIMDIS  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** greeneet  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 03 JUN 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <03 JUN 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <04 OCT 2004 by greeneet>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** : KUWAITI COOPERATION DELEGATION VISIT  
**TAGS:** PFOR, ECON, KU, BA  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006